

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY GRILLS ENERGY SECRETARY

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today questioned U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham during a hearing held by the Interior Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. Hinchey harshly criticized the Energy Department's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2002 for foolishly ignoring energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.

"Energy efficiency and renewable energy sources should be at the center of any strategy to meet our energy needs and to protect consumers and the environment," said Hinchey. "This budget proposal would gut these programs."

With the exception of a \$150 million increase for home weatherization, the Bush Administration proposes cutting almost every energy conservation account in the Department of Energy's budget. Without the weatherization increase, the proposed budget represents a cut of \$180 million in conservation programs.

"I support an increase in the weatherization budget, but it makes no sense to fund weatherization at the expense of research into building energy efficient homes," Hinchey added. "We will never be able to properly weatherize existing homes unless we have the technologies to build efficient homes in the first place."

The proposed budget eliminates the Energy Efficiency Science Initiative, which funds university led research that is not done by industry. It also eliminates funding for the Cooperative Programs with the States. It cuts the Federal Energy Management Program by 48 percent and cuts funding for setting appliance efficiency standards by more than half. Deep cuts are also made in funding for improving state and local building codes, and for research and development in buildings and transportation sectors. Programs aimed at finding ways to use fossil fuels more efficiently are hit with a \$150 million reduction.

The Department of Energy's efficiency standards save businesses and consumers approximately \$25 billion each year, lessen oil imports, and prevent the emission of millions of tons of pollution. Energy efficiency gains currently "produce" or recycle more energy than any other domestic source. It has also been a major force in the nation's economy. A federal investment of \$12 billion through 1999 has returned more than \$100 billion to the economy.

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"Ironically, the president is issuing an executive order today to get federal buildings to cut back on energy use, citing the need to set a good example," Hinchey said. "Crippling our successful energy efficiency programs sets exactly the wrong example."

Hinchey is a member of the Interior Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations.

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